



COMPLIANCE UPDATE
By Kim Slote, policy analyst

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

As we work our way through spring and into summer, there is potential for a major disaster in every storm that blows through the state. A major disaster can seriously affect operations at an institution and its ability to serve the students and community where it is located. It is important for affected parties to act quickly and appropriately after any disaster. To ensure everyone is prepared in the event of a federally declared major disaster in your area, I am providing links to important guidance and resources to remind everyone of the relief available for Title IV student financial aid participants. Keep in mind that only the subset of disasters designated for “Individual Assistance” on the [Federal Emergency Management Agency’s \(FEMA\)](#) website are eligible for the relief intended.

A major disaster must be federally declared to warrant assistance and is defined in The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122(2)) as:

...any natural catastrophe (including any hurricane, tornado, storm, high water, winddriven water, tidal wave, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, or drought), or, regardless of cause, any fire, flood, or explosion, in any part of the United States, which in the determination of the President causes damage of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant major disaster assistance under this chapter to supplement the efforts and available resources of States, local governments, and disaster relief organizations in alleviating the damage, loss, hardship, or suffering caused thereby.

Regulatory relief is provided to students, institutions, lenders, guaranty agencies and their servicers in administering the federal student financial aid programs authorized by the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. Relief applies to all recipients of Title IV aid and their families who at the time of the disaster were residing in, employed in or attending an institution located in a federally declared disaster area in the United States. For more information on what type of relief is available, review the following guidance and resources.

- [Dear Colleague Letter GEN-10-16 – Guidance for helping Title IV participants affected by a major disaster – Aug. 23, 2010](#)
- [34 CFR 675.18\(i\) Flexibility in the event of a major disaster](#)
- [2015-2016 Federal Student Aid Handbook, Vol. 6, Chapter 2, Page 43](#)
- [Federal Student Aid Natural Disaster Information page on IFAP](#)
- [Disaster Information for Students or Parents on Federal Student Aid Website](#)